

Christian Confidence
Hebrews 4:12-16

June 1, 2014

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^A John 12:47-48, 2 Corinthians 5:19

^B Hebrews 1:3, 3:1

^C John 3:36, 1:12; Genesis 2:18

A. Introduction

1. Which One?

- a. Kate had 3 children: Miriam, age 7; Stephen, age 6; and Emily, age 5
 - (A) Emily, the youngest, was now in kindergarten, and had reached that age when she was never short of questions to ask, or shy of asking
 - (B) sometimes she drove her mother Kate to distraction with all of her question – for there seemed no subject that Emily ever avoided
 - (C) coming home from school one day, she burst out with her inevitable query; this time, “Mommy, how many children did you want?”
 - (D) Kate looked thoughtfully at her youngest child for a moment, and then carefully answered, “Two.”
 - (E) Emily thought about that a while; then came the follow-up question, “Me, and who else?” —{2}.
- b. Emily was not short of questions, neither was she short of confidence in the security of her relationship with her mother
- c. neither should any Christian be short of confidence in the security of his or her relationship with the heavenly Father
- d. Why? ... the answers will be found in our text today as found in

2. Scripture reading Hebrews 4:9-16

- a. of which we shall look in detail only at verses 12 to 16
- b. reading the earlier verses to remind us of the context, which concerns the promised rest of God remaining for the people of God, and the condition of being judged worthy or not of entering into that rest

3. Facts Giving Us This Confidence

- a. The Word of God
- b. The Discernment of Our Judge
- c. The Excellence of Our High Priest

- B. The Word of God 4:12
1. "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."
 2. Sparkling Facets of God's Word
 - a. keep in mind the message of the preceding verses
 - (A) that God still gives a promise of His rest to His people
 - (B) that God gives a warning as to the criteria by which He will adjudge who is to enter His rest: believing and obeying
 - b. now, as we illustrated last Sunday, there is a jewel in that term
 - (A) "the word of God", "the word of the Lord", or, simply, "the word" (in a context where it is spoken by God)
 - (B) as it is used in the holy Scriptures
 - (C) this diamond, as the Holy Spirit's illumination falls upon it
 - (D) in different contexts catches His light in a different way
 - (E) so the word of God shines forth from different facets; in varying aspects and manifold emphases
 - c. some of those facets which were noted is that it can be
 - (A) God's word of prophecy
 - (B) God's word of command
 - (C) God's word of the gospel; and so on
 - d. and here in Hebrews 4:12, that light shines from two facets
 - (A) an emphasis on God's word of promise
 - (B) an emphasis on God's word of judgement
 3. God's Word of Promise
 - a. with the promise in mind that "There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God." (4:9)
 - b. that promise still lives – though a generation of Israel died in the wilderness – because our God is a

living God; He still lives

- c. that promise is still effective – though it became ineffective to that dying generation on account of unbelief and disobedience (4:2, 6) – because with God’s spoken word is His power to carry it out

4. God’s Word of Judgement

- a. God has just revealed in this chapter the reasons why that people did not enter Canaan and its rest
- b. not because their God – or His word – was dead or impotent
- c. but that God swore in His wrath – His judicial stand against wrong – that they should not enter His rest (4:3) due to their hardness of heart as shown in disbelief and disobedience (4:2, 6, 7)

5. This Word of God Gives Us Confidence

- a. it was not failure of the word of God but Israel’s unbelief in its promise and of judgement that they failed to enter their rest in Canaan
- b. the Christian is therefore assured in 4:3, “For we who have believed enter that rest, ...” – we enter that rest – in reality heaven is already ours; heaven’s realization will take place when Christ returns

C. The Discernment of Our Judge 4:13

- 1. “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”
- 2. The Basis of Judgement
 - a. in the courts of this world, the truth often is not known – the work of lawyers often seems to be to hide or to blur the truth
 - b. human juries try to determine facts; judges determine and apply law
 - c. but how will man be judged fit for God’s rest, in heaven? “47 If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.” (John 12:47-48)
 - d. that law is the word spoken by the One by whom also we shall be judged, “For we must all appear before

the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10)

3. Our Judge Knows

- a. Jesus is the Judge of those who shall enter God’s rest or not
- b. He will separate the sheep on one side, the goats on the other; that is, He will divide all mankind into two groups with two eternal destinies
- c. He not only knows God’s word of judgement whereby mankind will be thus separated – for it is the word which He Himself has spoken
- d. but also knows what is in a man – we stand uncovered in His sight, with every fact of our entire being stands wide open before His eyes

4. This Gives Us Confidence

- a. our Judge knows the word of promise, of judgement and all the facts
- b. with such a Judge it is impossible that justice should ever go wrong

D. The Excellence of Our High Priest

1. His Power 4:14

- a. “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.”
- b. He Is Great
 - (A) this verse begins a section covering the next several chapters
 - (B) whose theme is Jesus as our High Priest
 - (C) which covers so many particulars about the office and work of the high priest that I cannot begin to summarise them adequately here
 - (D) except this fact: Jesus, as our high priest, is far better than any OT high priest, than any of Aaron and his descendants
 - (E) Jesus is our GREAT High Priest; indeed, He is the Greatest
- c. He Is in Position

- (A) spatially, expressed in terms that we as humans can understand, we think of the place of God's residence, called heaven, as being "up", although the Bible clearly reveals that as well as being high beyond all His creation, God is also present everywhere in it
- (B) thus, here we have a reference to the result of Christ's ascension up through the cloud forty days after the resurrection, to which Hebrews 1:3 makes reference: "... When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,"
- (C) in the OT, the high priest, once a year on the day of atonement, entered into the Holy of Holies, there to stand before the mercy-seat and make atonement for the sins of the people of God
- (D) Jesus has gone through the veil into the real Holy of Holies, into the presence of God to make atonement for the sins of the people of God and is seated – in the position of sovereignty and power

d. A Reason for Confidence

- (A) our confession is not the mere words of some creed
- (B) Hebrews 3:1 defines our confession: "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;" – our confession is a Person
- (C) that Person is Jesus Christ our High Priest – that Jesus, exalted now, is the only Priest we need to argue our cause before God
- (D) holding fast to Him is the reason we can have confidence

2. His Humanity 4:15

- a. "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."
- b. but, the objection might be made, if Jesus is now so high; so exalted; now given a Name which above every other name, that at the Name of Jesus, every knee should bow – can One so exalted care for us?
- c. this is the lie of Romanism which claims we must have other advocates to pray on our behalf: the saints, the angels, Mary
- d. but now the clear statement is made, this same Jesus, Son of God, seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high, really cares for US
- e. Jesus looks down upon us and He know our weaknesses

- (A) He knows what it is to be tired, hungry, misunderstood, rejected
 - (B) He knows what it is to have brothers, friends abandon Him
 - (C) He knows what it is to face temptation upon temptation; the relentless opposition and accusation of Satan
 - (D) so He can sympathise with us in our every difficulty
- f. and as He was sinless, He can do so with the full knowledge and the ability to keep us also from falling in the face of such difficulty

3. His Throne of Grace 4:16

- a. "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."
- (A) that expression, "the throne of grace", really embodies the answer to the universal need of mankind – Jesus is the throne of grace
 - (B) a throne is the representation of power; in this case, of absolute power – power to do all He wills, and when, and where, and how
 - (C) grace is the representation of God's good purpose for believing mankind – for His people – of redemption from bondage, of forgiveness of sin, of entering into His rest of heavenly fellowship
- b. Jesus is the throne of grace (mercy-seat): the friend of sinners of whom we sing, the powerful redeemer bringing us into His own kingdom
- (A) that is why we can confidently draw near to him to find
 - (B) A Place to Receive Mercy – Jesus is our mercy-seat
 - (1) that mercy is offered in this way by God is evidence of our need for mercy – mercy can do what our good works cannot
 - (2) Jesus looks, feels compassion: mercy for you and for me
- c. A Place to Find Help
- (A) when you go to Jesus, you are going to the Creator
 - (B) then what need is there that He cannot meet?
 - (C) then what evil power is there that He cannot overcome?
 - (D) perfect help; seasonable help; as only God can help; He helps

E. Conclusion

1. Confidently Come to God

- a. the Bible is God's love letter, wooing mankind back to Himself
 - (A) it reveals the wrong that mankind has committed, rejecting God
 - (B) and explains the path in Jesus Christ by which man can return
- b. it states the condition – “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36) – acceptance of Jesus by faith
- c. this brings not merely the deliverance from penalty of judgement, but the restoration of an indescribable relationship to God, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,” (John 1:12) – join His family!

2. Confidently Ask for Help

- a. there is no shame in needing help
 - (A) the fact that most people get married is a tacit admission that in some way we are incomplete; cannot go it alone; God agrees: “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’” (Genesis 2:18)
 - (B) the same is true of our spiritual nature; as Martin Luther wrote,
Did we in our own strength confide
Our striving would be losing,
Were not the right Man on our side,
The man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He—^{3}.
- b. moreover, unlike the help you often get on the 'phone from customer “service” – you can pray to Jesus, God's throne of grace,
 - (A) knowing that there you can obtain really, powerful help
 - (B) just when you need it most!

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

Barnes –	<i>Notes on the New Testament, et alia</i> , by Rev Albert Barnes, Gall & Inglis, Edinburgh
BM –	<i>Biblical Museum</i> , Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
EBC –	<i>The Expositor’s Bible Commentary</i> , © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan <i>Hebrews</i> , by Leon Morris
EGT –	<i>The Expositor’s Greek Testament</i> , Hodder & Stoughton <i>Hebrews</i> , by Marcus Dods
Gill –	<i>Exposition of the Old Testament, Exposition of the New Testament</i> , by John Gill, D.D.
Kerux –	The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com .
NICNT –	<i>The New International Commentary on the New Testament</i> <i>The Epistle to the Hebrew</i> , by F. F. Bruce
RWP –	<i>Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament</i> , by Dr. A. T. Robertson
TYN –	<i>The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries</i> <i>Hebrews</i> , by Donald Guthrie

2. Adapted from item by *Kathrine A. Barhydt (c) 1999, from “Chicken Soup for the Parent's Soul” by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Kimberly Kirberger and Raymond Aaron*
3. “*A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*,” verse 2, by Martin Luther (1483-1546), translation by Frederick Henry Hedge (1805-1890)